

Learning Through Difficulties

Have you ever wondered what's next? When you have been faced with one difficulty after another don't you ask this question? The saying goes, "When it rains it pours." Some of us have experienced this and perhaps even now this hits very close to home.

Recently, I spoke with a person who was dealing with the deaths of two family members within three weeks of one another, issues with their children at school, and financial burdens that were totally unexpected. They felt as though their world was falling apart and they were dealing with all the emotions that accompany the question above. Perhaps the question I have heard most often from people in these situations is simply, "Why?"

Most often, I don't have an answer. Rarely do we find the answers for the difficult things that happen in life. We can struggle for long periods of time and never find a reason for our difficulties. However, the presence of pain in our lives and the absence of answers may provide more of a chance to grow than we first believe. It is often true that the most we learn out of life is through the difficulties we experience. It is out of our pain that we learn most about ourselves and we gain wisdom that can't be found any other way.

Several years ago Henri Nouwen wrote the book, The Wounded Healer. One of the many points he makes is that people often forget that our deepest sources of pain and difficulty may be the tools that help someone else find their way through the pain of life. I am not suggesting in any way that the reason for our pain is to be able to help others. However, our ability to be of help to someone else who is in real need may come best from one who has been there and understands through experience.

Perhaps this then is the way to move on and gain some perspective in the middle of our circumstances. Perhaps we can ask a different question. Not "what next?" but rather "What can I learn from this experience and therefore grow by it?" and "How can I help someone else who is facing what I have faced?" Be an instrument for the better. Be a wounded healer.